

Lisa Nicholson

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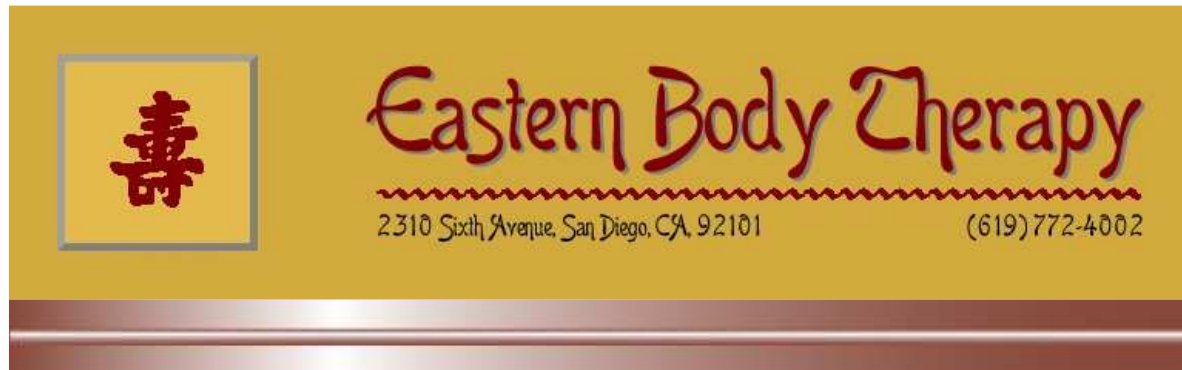
Sent: Tuesday, May 05, 2009 2:50 PM

To: lnicholson@ebtherapy.com

Subject: Eastern Body Therapy Swine Flu Bulletin

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Health Notes Swine Flu Bulletin

April 2009 - Vol2, Issue 3

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Dear Lisa,

So many people who have come into the office this week have been concerned about the recent influenza outbreak that I thought an extra mailing was in order to provide some facts about the H1N1 flu! I hope this will help you to make rational decisions about your particular level of risk and how to minimize your chances of becoming ill.



I'm here to be your partner in well-being. If there is anything I can do to help, please let me know.

Peace and health,
Lisa Nicholson, L.Ac.

Swine Flu - How Real is the Threat?

Flu Facts

1) **Every year, 10 to 20 percent of Americans get sick with the flu (influenza).** (Source: excerpt from Focus On The Flu: NIAID) . In the United States, approximately 25 percent of the population (or 35 to 50 million Americans) has flu-associated illness annually, leading to an average of 20,000 to 40,000 deaths per year (this equates to 55-100 deaths per day



in the US from ANY typical flu outbreak, and constitutes a typical death rate of less than .1% of flu sufferers). (Source: excerpt from *Microbes in Sickness and in Health* - Publications, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases: NIAID).

2) **An estimated 100,000 hospitalizations and about 20,000 to 40,000 deaths occur each year from the flu or its complications.** (Source: excerpt from *Focus On The Flu*: NIAID)

3) **The CDC lumps flu and pneumonia deaths together in their statistics.** Pneumonia is a secondary (often bacterial) infection which tends to closely follow flu infection. The immune system expends so much energy to fight the flu that it is overwhelmed by the secondary infection. This is why doctors often give an antibiotic to treat flu symptoms which have persisted for longer than 5-7 days. Pneumonia is more dangerous in patients who are elderly, very young, or have compromised immune systems.

4) **We tend to find what we are looking for.** The media has made a big deal about the spread of flu, and the increase in cases. Many people develop flu symptoms, stay home for a few days, recover, and move on. With all the media attention, everyone with a sniffle is going to the doctor, and doctors are doing more cultures to confirm what they have. When more cultures are run, more cases are found. Does this mean this strain is more rapidly spreading or more dangerous than any other flu? Not necessarily. It simply means we are looking for it!

5) **As of today, May 5, 2009, there have been 1490 cases world-wide CONFIRMED by laboratory testing in 21 countries.** There have been 30 CONFIRMED deaths world-wide, 29 in Mexico and 1 in the US who was a 2 year old child brought over from Mexico already sick. These statistics were taken from the WHO website and are based on the latest update on May 5.

6) **Viruses are living beings. Their goal in life is to reproduce, and they need a host to do so.** Killing their host is not in the best interest of the virus's survival. While some viruses do rapidly kill their hosts, most do not. Viruses reproduce rapidly, so they tend to mutate more quickly than other organisms which do not reproduce rapidly. Mutations can make a virus more OR less dangerous to the host, and there is no real way to predict how a virus will mutate. That said, scientists believe that the H1N1 flu virus does NOT contain certain proteins which would make it most likely to mutate in a way which would be devastating to its host (us!)

The following is a quote from the Los Angeles Times article *Scientists see this flu strain as relatively mild. Genetic data indicate this outbreak won't be as deadly as that of 1918, or even the average winter* by Karen Kaplan and Alan Zarembo (April 30, 2009):

"Flu viruses are known to be notoriously unpredictable, and this strain could mutate at any point -- becoming either more benign or dangerously severe. But mounting preliminary evidence from genetics labs, epidemiology models and simple mathematics suggests that the worst-case scenarios are likely to be avoided in the current outbreak.

"This virus doesn't have anywhere near the capacity to kill like the 1918 virus," which claimed an estimated 50 million victims worldwide, said Richard Webby, a leading influenza virologist at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tenn.

When the current virus was first identified, the similarities between it and the 1918 flu seemed ominous.

Both arose in the spring at the tail end of the flu season. Both seemed to strike people who were young and healthy instead of the elderly and infants. Both were H1N1 strains, so called because they had the same types of two key proteins that are largely responsible for a virus' ability to infect and spread.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health published genetic sequence data Monday morning of flu samples isolated from patients in California and Texas, and thousands of scientists immediately began downloading the information. Comparisons to known killers -- such as the 1918 strain and the highly lethal H5N1 avian virus --

have since provided welcome news.

"There are certain characteristics, molecular signatures, which this virus lacks," said Peter Palese, a microbiologist and influenza expert at Mt. Sinai Medical Center in New York. In particular, the swine flu lacks an amino acid that appears to increase the number of virus particles in the lungs and make the disease more deadly.

Scientists have identified several other differences between the current virus and its 1918 predecessor, but the significance of those differences is still unclear, said Dr. Scott Layne, an epidemiologist at the UCLA School of Public Health."

Epidemic and Pandemic Defined

Epidemic: (from thefreedictionary.com) Any infectious disease that develops and spreads rapidly to many people

Epidemic: (from Wikipedia) In epidemiology, an epidemic (from Greek epi- upon + demos people) occurs when new cases of a certain disease occur in a given human population, during a given period, and substantially exceed what is "expected" based on recent experience (the number of new cases in the population during a specified period of time is called the "incidence rate"). In recent usages, the disease is not required to be communicable; examples include cancer or heart disease.

Pandemic: (from thefreedictionary.com) Epidemic over a wide geographic area and affecting a large proportion of the population

Pandemic: (from Wikipedia) (from Greek pan all + demos people) Is an epidemic of infectious disease that spreads through populations across a large region; for instance a continent, or even worldwide.

World Health Organization Pandemic Alert System Phases, Defined



The World Health Organization (WHO) is responsible for a variety of functions relating to the prediction of disease outbreaks, tracking of disease outbreaks, and coordinating attempts to slow the spread of diseases. A phase system was implemented in approximately 2005 to describe the spread of disease and appropriate levels of preparedness and response to diseases which are capable of spreading on a global level. There are specific criteria for alerts at each phase. The following is the language, from the WHO regarding phase 4, phase 5 and phase 6 in their pandemic alert system.

Phase 4 is characterized by verified human-to-human transmission of an animal or human-animal influenza reassortant virus able to cause "community-level outbreaks." The ability to cause sustained disease outbreaks in a community marks a significant upwards shift in the risk for a pandemic. Any country that suspects or has verified such an event should urgently consult with WHO so that the situation can be jointly assessed and a decision made by the affected country if implementation of a rapid pandemic containment operation is warranted. Phase 4 indicates a significant increase in risk of a pandemic but does not necessarily mean that a pandemic is a forgone conclusion.

Phase 5 is characterized by human-to-human spread of the virus into at least two countries in one WHO region. While most countries will not be affected at this stage, the declaration of Phase 5 is a strong signal that a pandemic is imminent and that the time to finalize the organization, communication, and implementation of the planned mitigation measures is short.

Phase 6, the pandemic phase, is characterized by community level outbreaks in at least one

other country in a different WHO region in addition to the criteria defined in Phase 5. Designation of this phase will indicate that a global pandemic is under way."

There are a few things to understand about these phases.

First, they are indicative of human to human transmission, and how many countries have confirmed cases. They are NOT indicative of how rapidly a disease is spreading in any specific community.

Second, they do NOT give any indication of the severity of illness any individual experiences as a result of getting the disease. Most flu outbreaks spread on a global level and are technically pandemics, but most flu outbreaks are not as deadly as the 1918 pandemic.

Third, the fact that a disease is labeled a pandemic DOES NOT automatically indicate that it will kill millions of people. Some pandemic diseases are capable of causing widespread death, but most are not.

I have heard people say that if the WHO goes to a level 6 alert they plan to take their children out of school. A level 6 indicates that the disease has been confirmed in another country in a different region from the 2 countries required for a level 5 alert. It has no bearing whatsoever on how many people in San Diego are infected, the rate of spread in our community, or the actual threat locally.

As of today, May 5, 2009, there have been 1490 cases world-wide CONFIRMED by laboratory testing in 21 countries. 403 of these cases have been in the United States. There have been 30 CONFIRMED deaths world-wide, 29 in Mexico and 1 in the US who was a 2 year old child brought over from Mexico already sick. These statistics were taken from the WHO website and are based on the latest update on May 5. Does this qualify as a level 5 pandemic? Yes. Does it justify the amount of fear the media is stimulating in the San Diego community? I think the fear is premature. While it is POSSIBLE for any flu virus to mutate into a deadly strain, the LIKELIHOOD is limited.

I will continue to keep an eye on how the course of this flu outbreak is progressing, and will send out additional newsletters if the situation becomes severe enough to warrant taking more than the usual precautions against seasonal illness!

Flu Prevention Tips and Tricks

So, should we be worried about this flu? I would say common sense applies! We are told all winter to take certain precautions to minimize becoming sick, and the same advice applies for this flu outbreak including:



- 1) Don't panic! Stress taxes your immune system which makes it less able to function normally.
- 2) Wash hands frequently, especially after handling door knobs and other surfaces commonly touched by a variety of people.
- 3) Get adequate rest and eat well.
- 4) If you become sick, stay home for a few days to minimize giving it to your whole office, AND to give yourself enough rest to recover!
- 5) Cover your cough.
- 6) Try to avoid being in close proximity (within 6 feet) of someone who is coughing, sneezing, or otherwise seems to have flu-like symptoms, and do your best to avoid being coughed or sneezed on.

7) If you have had a recent illness or have a condition which compromises your immune system, consider taking supplements for immune system support. Vitamin D, Beta Carotene, Vitamin C and a variety of herbals may help.

8) If you do become ill, the earlier you start on an herbal formula the more likely it is to be effective. Please call me at the first sign of illness so you can pick up herbs as quickly as possible!



I always have immune supporting herbal formulas available, as well as herbs which can help you get better quicker if you do get sick. If you have any questions about what supplements may be helpful for you, please call me at (619)772-4002!

I hope this helps you to stay healthy and sane through this flu season! As always, please use me as a resource if you have any questions!

Peace and Health,

Lisa
Eastern Body Therapy

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